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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5905  
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS ATHENS 004865

DEPT FOR S/CT

E.O. 12356: N/A

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SUBJECT: GREEK PRESS REPORT OF IRANIAN/IRA CONNECTIONS

REF: (A) DUBLIN 2545; (B) ATHENS 4595

11. AS PER REF A REQUEST, THE FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF THE "ELEFTHEROS TYPOS" ARTICLE ON IRA/IRANIAN CONNECTIONS. ALSO SEE PARA 3 FOR AN ADDITIONAL MEDIA REPORT ON THIS ISSUE.

12. BEGIN TEXT:

GREEK AND BRITISH AUTHORITIES SUSPECT THAT A LARGE QUANTITY OF HEROIN SMUGGLED TO ENGLAND BY TWO GERMANS WHO WERE ARRESTED, WAS INTENDED TO HELP FINANCE IRA ACTIVITIES.

ACCORDING TO RELIABLE INFORMATION FROM "ELEFTHEROS TYPOS;" A GROUP OF BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENTS SPECIALIZING IN IRA ACTIVITIES WILL BE VISITING ATHENS AND HAVE REQUESTED A BRIEFING FROM GREEK AUTHORITIES ON THE EVIDENCE IN THE DRUG SMUGGLING CASE.

THE TWO GERMANS, YURGEN MERX AND HIS WIFE TUNZA-ANNETTE MERX, ADMITTED TO SMUGGLING LARGE QUANTITIES OF NARCOTICS TO GREAT BRITAIN ON FOUR OCCASIONS. BRITISH AUTHORITIES HAVE TRAVELED TO GREECE IN HOPES OF DETERMINING THE BRITISH RECIPIENTS OF THE NARCOTICS. THEY HAVE DEDUCED FROM THE GERMANS TESTIMONY THAT THE NARCOTICS WERE INTENDED TO FINANCE IRA ACTIVITIES.

ACCORDING TO INFORMATION EXCHANGED BETWEEN RELEVANT AGENCIES, THE SECRET IRANIAN SERVICES ARE BEHIND THE PREVIOUSLY SMUGGLED A MUCH LARGER AMOUNT.

THE INVESTIGATION FOCUSED ON PATRICK O'BRIAN, A 40 YEAR-OLD IRISHMAN FROM LIMERICK, WHO FOLLOWED THE SAME ROUTE AS THE GERMANS AND WAS ALSO ARRESTED IN GREECE. HE HAD SMUGGLED NARCOTICS WORTH 500 MILLION DRACHMAS (USD 2 MILLION) FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND TURKEY TO GREAT BRITAIN. LAST SEPTEMBER O'BRIAN WAS SENTENCED TO SERVE A NINE YEAR PRISON TERM IN GREECE. BOTH GREEK AND BRITISH AUTHORITIES HAVE CONNECTED THE O'BRIAN CASE WITH THE RECENT GERMAN ARREST.

ON JANUARY 14, THE ARAB NEWSPAPER "AL WATAN AL ARABI," PUBLISHED IN BEIRUT AND PARIS, CONTAINED A DETAILED REPORT ON IRA CONTACTS WITH THE IRANIAN SECRET SERVICES. THE NEWSPAPER NAMED AMIR HOUSEIN TAGAVI AS HEAD OF THE WESTERN EUROPEAN SECTION OF THE IRANIAN SECRET SERVICES, AND POSITED THAT TAGAVI COORDINATES CONTACTS BETWEEN THE IRA AND (THE GREEK TERRORIST GROUP) "17 NOVEMBER" AND THE "REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL" OF ABU NIDAL AND THE HEZBOLLAH.

LAST JANUARY THE ITALIAN NEWSPAPER "CORRIERE DE LA SERRA" REPORTED THAT 17 NOVEMBER MEMBERS HAD VISITED TEHRAN AND HAD CONTACTS WITH THE IRANIAN SECRET SERVICES. IRANIAN OFFICIALS HAVE DENIED ANY CONNECTIONS, WHILE THE ITALIAN JOURNALIST INSISTS ON THE ACCURACY OF HIS INFORMATION.

END TEXT.

13. THE FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF A SEPARATE MAY 4 STORY BY THE GREEK DAILY "ELEFTHEROTYPIA" ON THIS

ISSUE:

FROM LONDON, THE NEWSPAPER "INDEPENDENT" PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE YESTERDAY REPORTING THAT IRAN OFFERED GUNS AND MONEY TO THE IRA, ASKING IN RETURN THAT ITS ASSASSINS MURDER TOP IRANIAN DISSIDENTS. REFERRING TO WELL INFORMED SOURCES, THE BRITISH NEWSPAPER ALSO REPORTED THAT OFFICIALS OF THE IRANIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES PROPOSED THIS DURING A SECRET MEETING IN TEHRAN, LAST NOVEMBER. AFTER THREE MONTHS, HOWEVER, THE IRA REJECTED THE OFFER. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GREEK TERRORIST ORGANIZATION 17 NOVEMBER, AS WELL AS THE ETA, PARTICIPATED IN THE MEETING.

LAST WEEK, THE IRANIAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRS IN LONDON HAS SUMMONED TO THE MFA AND HAS ASKED THAT THE CONTACTS OF IRAN WITH THE IRA BE STOPPED. THOSE CONTACTS WERE DISCLOSED BY THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SERVICE.

NILES